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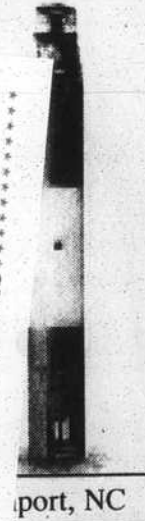


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Volume 67, Number 29

Published every Wednesday

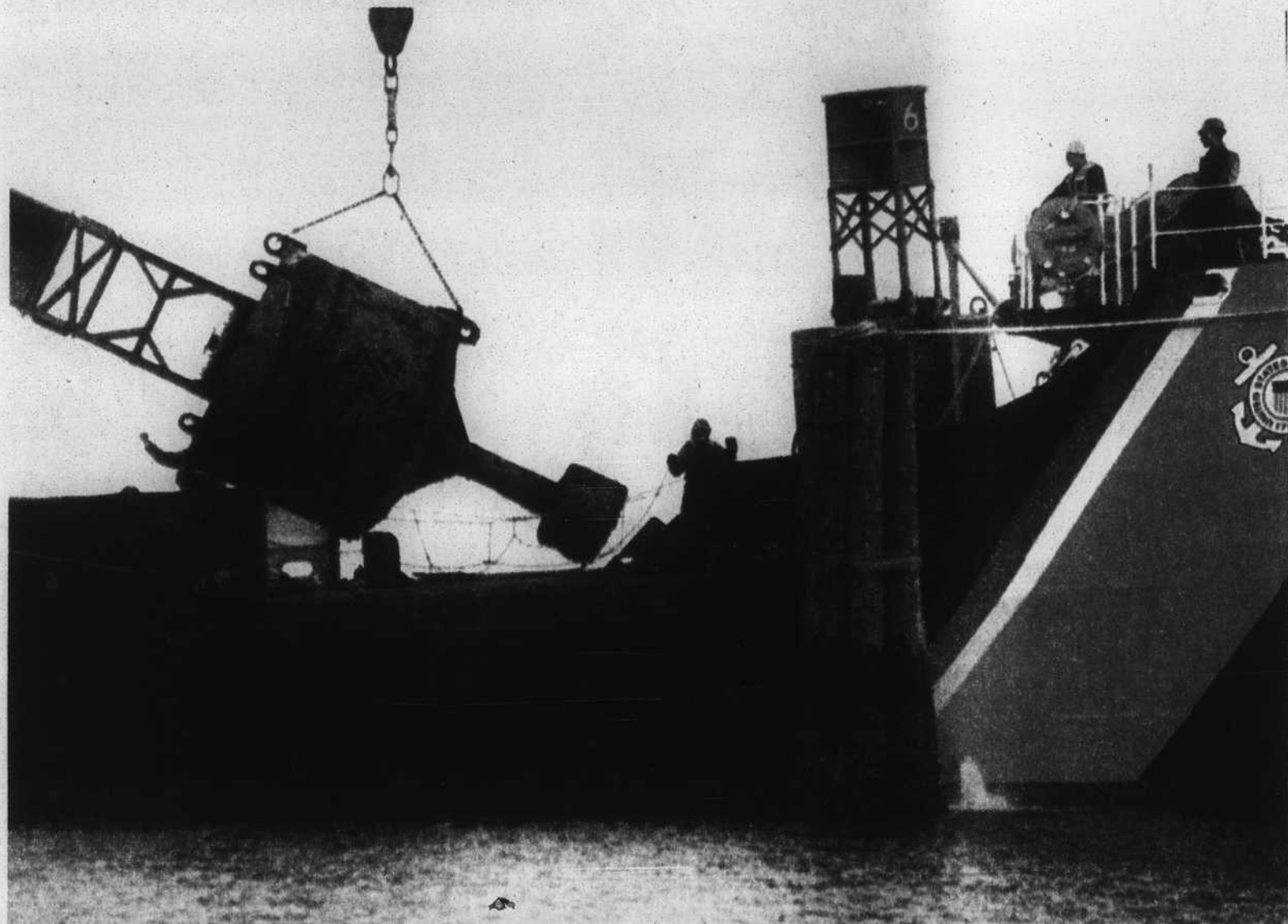
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Crewmen of the Coast Guard buoy tender *Gentian* shift a buoy on the forward deck before securing the boom and settling in for the night at Southport's city pier. The *Gentian* is a regular visitor at the pier, a favorite of harborwatchers and a delight for tourists.

Photo by Jim Harper

County, towns meet Regional sewer among highest plan priorities

By Terry Pope
County Editor

The need for regional sewer was a main concern in all four focus groups participating in a three-hour municipal and county planning session last week.

About 40 planners from town and county governments met at the county government center near Bolivia to share concerns about growth issues facing them during the next ten to 20 years.

After dividing into four groups, the top four or five issues were listed and sewer seemed to rise to the top. County planning director Jeff Coutu said after reviewing the lists his staff will schedule another meeting in 60 to 90 days and focus specifically on the top concerns.

"We want to come up with a mission statement of where we want to go next," said Coutu. "This should tell us what we need to do, whether we want to zero in on four issues or just one issue."

The lack of regional sewer to protect the environment and help make land suitable for development was

'To be able to network in the county and build upon the experiences of other planning boards will no doubt be an uplifting experience for all of us.'

Alan Lewis
Planning vice-chairman

the number-one concern on three of four lists and may likely be the primary focus when planners return to the drawing board in May or June. Planning groups list- See Regional, page 6

School facility report already needs update

By Holly Edwards
Feature Editor

A ten-year facility needs study completed two years ago for Brunswick County schools already is out of date and a new ten-year study is needed to justify future requests for funding of construction projects, Brunswick County school officials say.

School board members voted 4-1 Monday night to allocate \$26,000 to hire Educational Consultants of Columbia, SC, to perform a comprehensive facility needs study of county schools. The report is expected to be complete in six months and will include student population projections as well as future need for expansion

of existing schools and construction of new schools. "Parts of the 1996 study are still accurate, but parts of it need to be revamped," said superintendent of schools Marion Wise. "The whole purpose of the new study is that we have to get ready for major renovations in the school system. County commissioners are going to have to decide how we get the funding, we have to justify our needs to the county commissioners, and the county commissioners have to justify our needs to the community."

Board member Pat Brown voted against hiring a consultant to perform the study, saying there are already personnel in the school system and county government who could perform a facility needs study without allo- See Schools, page 8

Mining firm, county make appeal to court

By Terry Pope
County Editor

Attorneys for both Martin Marietta and Brunswick County went before the N. C. Supreme Court on Monday to argue the case that must now await a ruling from the highest legal authority in this state.

It could take months to get an opinion on whether a Brunswick County Superior Court judge was correct to rule Martin Marietta Aggregates has a legal and constitutional right to mine for limestone on a 1,000-acre tract it purchased north of Southport four years ago.

Brunswick County attorney Huey Marshall said both sides presented their arguments to the Supreme Court on Monday and See Appeal, page 9

'It's an interesting case because both parties are arguing that the Court of Appeals was wrong, but for different reasons.'

Huey Marshall
County attorney

Yaupon Beach Should tap impact fees be reduced?

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

It cost Yaupon Beach residents big money to build a public wastewater management system.

Some of the cost of that system was paid up-front by existing property owners and commercial interests. Some of those costs continue to be paid by impact and tap fees the town charges new arrivals.

But, should the Town of Yaupon Beach lower those wastewater impact and tap fees to attract business that will expand the tax base and bring thousands in sales tax dollars year after year?

Commissioner Dick Marshall says so. He said a group of investors has expressed interest in building a spacious resort hotel in Yaupon Beach, but may not do it if sewer impact fees and other development fees are too high. Marshall told fellow commissioners Monday night he saw no wrong in lowering impact fees for this one project in return for the sales tax revenue it will continue to bring to Yaupon Beach.

"I think it would be very stupid not to give a little," Marshall said, asserting impact fees are a-ide are not "written in stone." The town would be compensated See Yaupon, page 6

County collection Garbage contract expected Monday

By Terry Pope
County Editor

County commissioners hope to sign a six-year contract Monday with Waste Industries Inc. that will provide countywide roadside garbage collection.

"We are getting very, very close now," said Brunswick County attorney Huey Marshall on Tuesday. "We are hoping to have a contract ready by then."

The deal was supposed to be finalized February 23, but attorneys for the garbage disposal company have been reviewing the documents at its home office in Raleigh and are working out details with its Brunswick County operations.

Last month, the board of commissioners voted 4-1, with Leslie Collier of District 3 voting no, to continue negotiations over the \$5-million-per-year deal but with assurance that the county would sign with Waste Industries at a later date. Waste Industries officials say that vote was necessary so it could order

equipment needed to fulfill contract obligations by July 1.

Marshall said Tuesday it doesn't appear that roadside collection will begin on July 1 even if the contract is signed Monday. Waste Industries has indicated that getting enough 90-gallon, roll-out carts to accommodate an estimated 40,000 households in the county may take more time than originally expected.

"If that is the case, it will begin as soon as it can," said Marshall.

All five county commissioners have indicated they agree with the concept of providing roadside collection to citizens and with finding a way to provide that service. Towns have been asked to sign intergovernmental agreements to allow for once-a-week pick-ups even inside town limits.

Brunswick County plans to impose tipping fees at its landfill and transfer stations on July 1. Commissioners directed county manager Jim Varner to provide copies of the proposed Waste Industries contract See Garbage, page 9

Acid fumes pose threat

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

A Long Beach police officer was overcome by fumes Saturday when he came to the aid of an elderly patient who had reportedly swallowed acid.

Officer Loren Lewis was treated See Acid, page 7

Guilty verdict in murder case

By Terry Pope
County Editor

All was quiet on the North Brunswick campus Thursday as a jury met in Bolivia to consider the guilt or innocence of Harold Vernard Greene Jr., on trial for second-degree murder in the shooting death of classmate Mark Wescott Jr.

After deliberating for two hours the jury found Greene guilty of murder, and the 17-year-old

defendant was sentenced by Brunswick County Superior Court judge William C. Gore Jr. to serve 12 to 15 years in prison. He will likely serve 12 years and six months before he is eligible for parole.

The verdict came exactly two years after the March 5, 1996, shooting in which Wescott was killed instantly when in the right side of his head by a shotgun blast fired by Greene inside his parents' home on Cedar Hill Road. Defense

attorney Mike Ramos never challenged that Greene had fired the gun but argued it was an accidental shooting.

Ramos stressed in his opening and closing arguments that jurors should set aside their emotions in the case. He said evidence shows how "unplanned and fortuitous" the terrible accident was as the four boys were "skipping school and

See Murder, page 7.

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